



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**North Carolina Association of County Commissioners**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 25, 2004

# **CATAWBA COUNTY COMMISSIONER INSTALLED AS ASSOCIATION FIRST VICE PRESIDENT**

Catawba County Commissioner Kitty Barnes was elected first vice president of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) on Saturday, Aug. 21, during the Association's 97<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. She was installed by Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue during the Association's Annual Banquet, which was held at the Grove Park Inn in Buncombe County.

As NCACC first vice president, Barnes will work closely with the other members of the NCACC Executive Committee to guide the Association's Board of Directors on legislative and administrative issues affecting counties throughout the year.

She was elected NCACC second vice president in August 2003 after serving on the NCACC Board of Directors for two years as a district director representing Catawba, Caldwell, Burke and Alexander counties. She is also a member of the Association's Risk Management Pools' Board of Trustees and is active in the National Association of Counties (NACo).

Commissioner Barnes is scheduled to become president of the NCACC in August 2005.

Barnes becomes first vice president at a time when the Association is preparing for a significant change and counties across the state are looking to the Association for leadership on several major issues.

"The executive director of the Association, Ron Aycok, will be retiring effective June 30, 2005 after ably serving the Association for twenty-eight years," Barnes said. "I will be serving on the search committee which will seek his successor, since the NCACC's Executive

Committee will be the search committee. It will be a big challenge to find someone to fill Ron's shoes. I certainly agree with the comments made at our convention by this year's Association president, County Commissioner Breedan Blackwell of Cumberland County, who said the search committee will work hard to find the very best executive director in the nation to lead the NCACC for the next 10 to 15 years, if not longer."

"Another major task for the coming year will be the completion of a strategic plan for the Association which will help determine our direction for the future," Barnes added. "I will chair the Tax and Finance Steering Committee for the Association. This committee deals with the financial relationships between the state and federal government. The committee's work touches on concerns common to all counties, especially Medicaid funding.

"North Carolina remains one of the few states in the nation that requires counties to provide funding for Medicaid. Seven percent of Catawba County's budget for fiscal year 2004-2005, over \$6.3 million, is committed to Medicaid, and our share of the costs are projected to rise by nine to twelve percent per year for the next several years. All counties remain concerned about the negative impact of this and other mandates, some of which come to us without any funding, meaning counties must pay the bill for programs they are required by the state and/or federal governments to provide. The Tax and Finance Steering Committee will continue seeking solutions to this growing problem," Barnes concluded.

Barnes was originally elected to the Catawba County Board of Commissioners in 1998. She currently serves as the chair of the Board. Prior to her election as county commissioner, she served for 12 years as a member of the Catawba County Board of Education.

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*The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners is the official voice of all 100 counties on issues being considered by the N.C. General Assembly and state agencies. For more information, contact NCACC Director of Communications Todd McGee at 919-715-7336. **You may contact Commissioner Barnes at 828-328-3347.***